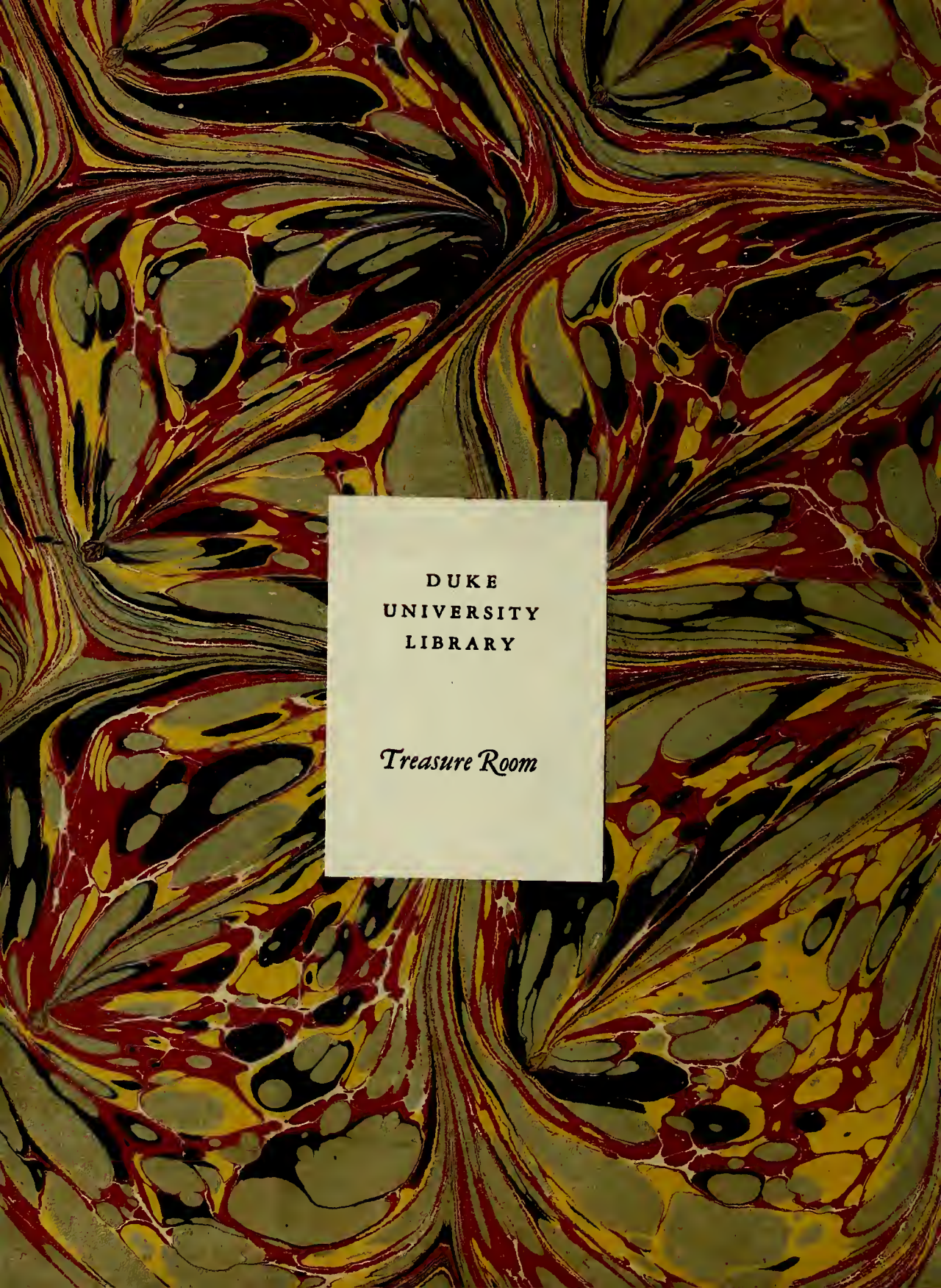
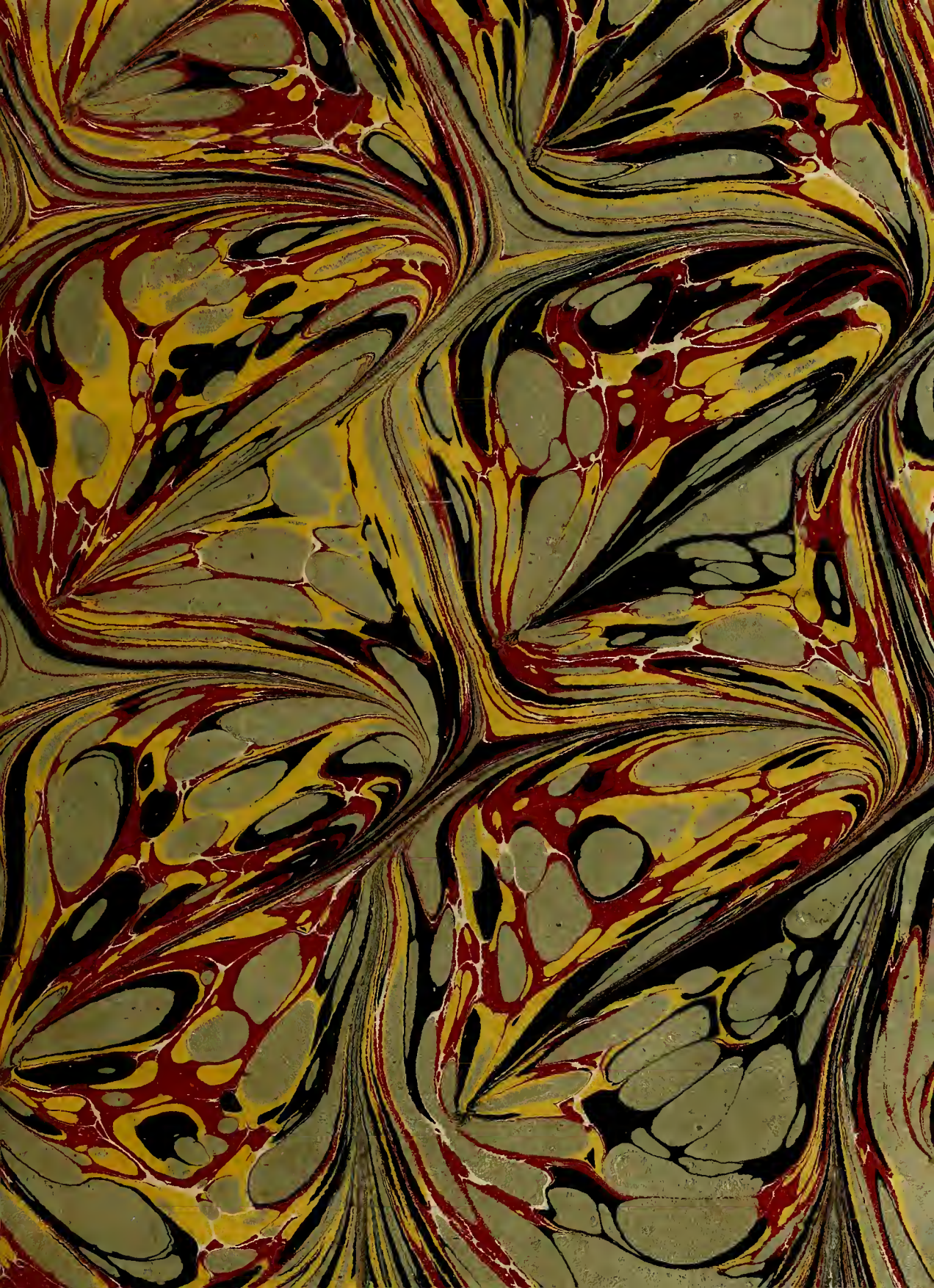






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M R
L. 7

L I N E S

WRITTEN AT

AMPTHILL PARK.

L I N E S

WRITTEN AT

AMPTHILL PARK,

IN

THE AUTUMN OF 1818.

— LOCOS LÆTOS, ET AMGENA VIRETA
FORTUNATORUM NEMORUM, SEDESQUE BEATAS. VIRG.

LONDON:

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET.

1819.

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TO

HENRY RICHARD VASSALL,

L O R D H O L L A N D,

THESE LINES ARE INSCRIBED,

IN TESTIMONY OF

THE SINCEREST RESPECT AND REGARD,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

L.H.

AMPTHILL PARK is situated close to the town of
Amphill, in Bedfordshire. A few Notes, chiefly with
a view to illustrate its local history, are added to the
following lines.

L I N E S

WRITTEN AT

AMPTHILL PARK.

I LEAVE thee, AMPTHILL:—O'er the billowy swell
That heaves thy grassy slopes no more I rove:—
I go—yet still my fancy feels the spell
Unbroken, which thy loveliness has wove.

Lingering I turn, and mark how Nature's hand
Has o'er yon steep her sylvan mantle thrown,—
Can art create, can wealth or power command
The beauties which are her's, and her's alone ?

She builds no forms of savage grandeur here,
No gloomy caverns yawn, no deserts frown,
No torrent, deafening the affrighted ear,
Leaps from some giant rock, in thunder, down.

But every milder charm around is spread,
Fair shapes, and glowing hues,—and many a tree
Through vale and upland lifts its tufted head,
Towering in blended grace, and majesty.

How fresh the air! what fragrance from the ground
Steams upward, as the cloudless orb of day
Sinks to the west, and all the landscape round
Basks in the splendor of his parting ray!

This is thy magic pencil, Autumn,—thine

These deepening shadows, and that golden glow,
Rich as the gems which, in some eastern mine,
Athwart the gloom their mingled radiance throw.

See yon huge OAKS, bathed in the amber flood;

See, through its brightness shines their mellow green,
Telling how long those reverend forms have stood,^a
And what their strength and beauty once have been.

They wreathe their roots, they fling their branches wide

O'er yon smooth meadow, as in ages past :
Assailed in vain, and shattered, they deride
Deep anchored still, the fury of the blast.

Some are uninjured yet :—their leafy heads
 Shelter the flocks, as they recline, or graze
 O'er-canopied,—what time the Dog-Star sheds
 Full on the withered turf his fiercest blaze.

While some, ere long the general doom to meet,
 Mourn the departed glories of their prime.—
 Not idly on their stubborn crests have beat
 The mighty pinions of all-conquering Time.

Else, when our fathers bent to Cromwell's yoke,^b
 Destined to bear his thunder o'er the seas
 Their veteran limbs had felt a ruder stroke,
 And proudly braved "the battle and the breeze."

Now to the dust, in ruin, down they go,
Verdure above, but canker all beneath;
As o'er some couch hangs poised the uplifted blow,
Where ebbing life contends in vain with death.

Chased by the sudden storm, th' affrighted sheep
Turn to their moss-clad boughs a wistful eye,
Then hie them to some sapless trunk, and deep
Within its sheltering hollows cavered lie.

Since these were acorns, since their course has run
From youth to age, from vigour to decay,
What deeds have in the busy world been done!
What thrones have sunk, what empires passed away!

And Man, inconstant Man! how has he changed

His manners, language, garb, religion, laws!

With what a shifting course his steps have ranged,

Toiling for power, or riches, or applause!

Yet still, though oft' on earth has been renewed

The transitory race,—whate'er his aim,

By hope excited, or by fear subdued,

His feelings, frailties, virtues, are the same.

Since these were acorns,—say, beneath their shade

What rival knights in mortal feud have strove,

What way-worn pilgrims told their beads, and prayed,

What maidens owned their long dissembled love!

Here oft, from toil released, has age reposed,

And childhood sported, in the sultry noon.—

Here have the outlaw's watchful eyelids closed;

Till on his broken slumbers rose the moon.

But who the story, AMPHILL, shall relate

Of thy brief masters,—of their joys, and pains;

Record their hardy deeds, their doubtful fate,

Or point where buried lie their proud remains,

Since old ALBINI, and his Norman band^c

Forced a hard pittance from the half-tilled soil;

Since tyrant-hunters through the prostrate land

Urged the hot work of unrelenting spoil.

Frowning above the tangled forest then

Full many a huge mishapen fortress stood

In loneliness—no dwelling, but the den

Of some stern chief, some ruthless man of blood.

Such were the lords of England!—homes like these

Sheltered and bred the fierce unlettered race :

Quick was their eye to mark, their hand to seize

The plunder of the battle, and the chase.

Ungrateful is the Poet's task who sings

Of days so dark and distant,—of the life

Of Rufus, or of Stephen, barbarous Kings,

Their iron rule, and their inglorious strife.

Yet must not FANHOPE's name be left untold,

FANHOPE, whose grace and gallant bearing went^d
 Deep to a royal heart, when, young, and bold,
 He conquered in the manly tournament.

CORNWALL, THE GREEN,—such was the name he bore,^e

Marking his birth-place on the emerald waves
 That lash the “Angel's Mount” with ceaseless roar,
 When o'er the vext Atlantic winter raves.

Here, at his bidding, towered above the plain^f

Thy stately Castle, AMPHILL ;—Britain's isle
 Amidst her sons had called to arms in vain
 A braver chieftain from a nobler pile

Hither, in triumph, from the laureate field

Of Agincourt, he brought the spoils of France ; §

Here idle hung the aged warrior's shield,

Unplumed his helm, uncouched his blunted lance.

Where is the voice of revelry and mirth

Through all the vassal country echoed wide,

When courteous knights, and dames of gentle birth,

Bent in proud homage to his princely bride?

Where is that castle now, whose thick-ribbed walls

The foe's assault so oft unshaken bore?—

Its battlements are swept away, its halls

Are sunk,—its very ruins are no more !

And many a heedless foot has pressed the spot

Where once it stood,—till yon fair Cross arose, ^h
Telling a tale that will not be forgot,

Of ill-starred CATHERINE,—of her wrongs and woes.

Yes,—ere their doom was sealed, on AMPHILL's towers

Fortune a ray of parting glory cast ;
Though graced and honoured oft, in happier hours,
The noblest guest they sheltered was the last.ⁱ

Here, as I muse, my fancy paints thee now,

DAUGHTER of ARRAGON!—That royal mien
Bespeaks thee, through the grief that clouds thy brow,
Through all a woman's sorrows,—still a queen.

Thy handmaid-rival is his destined bride!—^k

What can restore the tyrant to thy arms,
Though earth and heav'n were warring on thy side,
'Gainst Henry's headstrong will, and Bullen's charms?

Thy tears, thy pleaded constancy and truth
But fan the flames which in his bosom rise,
While beauty unenjoyed, and blooming youth
Play round her cheek, and sparkle in her eyes.

Yet stood'st thou firm in that disastrous hour,
Resolved in silence to submit thy cause
Rather to open force and princely power,
Than coward judges and perverted laws.

Yet widowed thus, forsaken, and oppressed,
Reft of a crown, insulted in thy love,
Faith held her stedfast empire o'er thy breast,¹
And whispering angels calmed thee from above.

Peace to thee, CATHERINE!—On the russet grass
Where the worn path imprints yon terraced height,
Courting the freshness of the breeze, I pass,
And with the opening landscape feast my sight.

How gracefully the green and swelling mound
Stoops to the valley!—Not unblest who roves
Or lingers on its brink, while smiles, around
Far stretched, this lovely scene, these plains and groves.

Soon HOUGHTON's chequered hills appear (a name
 Allied to AMPHILL) crowned with many a tree
 In shape and hue not differing, nor the same,
 Such should the kindred forms of sisters be. ^m

The terraced walk, the turf that gently swells,
 Adorn them both ;—before th' enchanted eye
 The spreading oaks along their shady dells
 And their rough knolls, in rival beauty, lie.

And, in this moment, as yon golden globe
 Full in the horizon flaming, braves the west, ⁿ
 Both share th' impartial splendor, in a robe
 From the same loom,—of heaven's own colours, drest.

It clothes this woodland promontory now,^o

Which from the rising vapours, as they sail

Along the meadow, rears its lofty brow,

And with a leafy rampart bounds the vale.

Here will I pause.—How quick the sunny breaks

O'er thy grey tower, romantic MILBROOK, pass! P

What hues beneath the slanting beam it takes,

Till evening blends them in one shadowy mass!

And lo! where, nearer still, in tufted trees

Half hidd'n, and ivy clasp'd, rude forms arise

Of antique masonry,—the shattered frieze

Beneath them, and the broken column lies.

Stranger, these pinnacles, and roofless walls,

And clustering chimneys, mark the spot where stood
Chambers now tenantless, and spacious halls,

The mansion of the “ fair, and wise, and good.”^q

Here, in the fabric which her hands had raised,

Dwelt “ Sydney’s sister, Pembroke’s mother,”—here
On all so bright and beautiful she gazed,

Blessing, and blest, through many a changeful year.

And Fame has told, (why is the tale disproved?)^r

Or bards have dreamed (Oh! were the vision true!)
That here her kinsman Knight enraptured roved,
And from these scenes his own “ Arcadia ” drew.

Thus will men's feelings and fond wishes blind

 Their faith!—to yonder legendary tree

The rustic points, boasting how there reclined

 SYDNEY, the flower of English chivalry.

Now is the once proud dwelling desolate,—

 From blazing hearths the smoke ascends no more,

Nor human step, nor voice, within the gate,

 Recalls the memory of the days of yore.

Along the courts with cumbrous fragments filled,

 Rank weeds and wiry grass obstruct my way ;

There reptiles lurk, there owls in darkness build,

 And soaring kites dart headlong on their prey.

Yet still, as if in mockery they remained,

Behold where gleam in sculptured stone on high
Amidst the general wreck unhurt, unstained,

The crests and scutcheons of quaint heraldry!^s

Hence, empty blazons, hence! How vain your boast,

When strength and beauty from these walls are fled;
Vain as the hovering of some steel-clad ghost

Round the damp vaults where sleep the mighty dead!—

But long may yonder ancient bower be seen^t

Within the varnished holly's fence enclosed;
And paths be trodden yet, and haunts look green

Where Age and Youth have wandered or reposed.

How frail the fabrics of Man's feeble hand!

Pass but a few short years, they melt away.—

Great Nature, thine are adamant,—they stand

In strength impassive, and defy decay.

The hill endures, the valley, and the stream ;

The zephyr still breathes on, still sweeps the blast ;

The glorious sun shines with as bright a beam

Now, as through all the countless ages past.

Rome's mouldering amphitheatre in vain

The long suspended stroke of Time derides ;

But see, Soracte crowns the Latian plain,

As when the snow first veiled its glittering sides.^u

Ev'n the proud pyramids shall crumble down

At last, and mingle with their native earth,

While on their unregarded dust shall frown

The marble rocks and caves which gave them birth.

But twilight comes apace.—The village chimes

Are on the breeze.—Returning, I pursue

My homeward way, where, 'midst o'ershadowing limes,

On to the Mansion leads the avenue.^x

There heartfelt mirth has brightened many an eye,

Persuasion there has dwelt on many a tongue,

And listening beauty has sat silent by,

While statesmen held debate, and poets sung.

Encircled thus by all his heart held dear,

By friends and children, say, does earth afford
Aught fairer than the wreath which, blooming here,
Crowned, in his own domains, their happy lord?

What boasts he now of all so long possessed,

So nobly used!—Tears were in every eye
When those, alas! who knew and loved thee best,
Bent o'er thy grave, lamented OSSORY!—

Yet was Death merciful,—a lingering course

He held not, nor prolonged th' unequal strife,
But sudden came, and with resistless force .

Checked the bright current of thy prosperous life.

A long, a last farewell!—to whom remains

The garland now?—to him, who, yet a child,
Here bounded, roe-like, once, o'er hills and plains,
On the smooth lawn, and in the forest wild.

Oh! what a gift Affection has bequeathed!

How dear to him, in manhood's prime, must be
The soil he trod, the very air he breathed
In the blithe hours of careless infancy!

As his eye glances, as his footsteps roam,
Still busy memory joys some spot to trace
Where once the happy school-boy, welcomed home,
In his fond kinsman's viewed a father's face.

HOLLAND AND AMPHILL!—Be the names combined
Through unborn ages,—o'er this hallowed ground
Ne'er may the spoiler tread, nor wasting wind
Nor axe amidst these “storied” woods resound.

Long may these happy social walls be graced
As now, by knowledge, and by manly sense
Wedded to childhood's mirth, by classic taste,
And sparkling wit, and vigorous eloquence.

Ere darkness closes on so bright a day,
Long may around his hospitable board
Midst kindred spirits, with unfading ray,
The sunshine of its Master's mind be poured.

Ne'er be the liberal thought, the generous deed

Unhonoured here, —ne'er unresisted be

The fiery bigot's dark relentless creed,

“ The oppressor's wrong,--the proud man's contumely.”

Here cease my numbers. Time is hurrying on:

Hours of delight, how quickly are you past!

Down from the glimmering west the sun is gone,

And night has waved her ebon wand at last.

I leave thee, AMPTHILL!—O'er the billowy swell

Which heaves thy grassy slopes no more I rove:

I go—but still my fancy feels the spell

Unbroken, which thy loveliness has wove!

N O T E S.

N O T E S.

NOTE a. Page 11, line 7.

“Telling how long their reverend forms have stood,”

The oaks in Ampthill Park are remarkable for their number and beauty. Some of them are still sound and flourishing, but the greater part, though of little value in the eyes of a timber merchant, are just in the state which a poet or a painter would desire. Perhaps there are no where in England to be found oaks more picturesque than these, nor of higher antiquity. A few are in the very last stage of decay, and cast their shadows “trunco, non frondibus.”

NOTE b. Page 12, line 9.

“Else, when our fathers bent to Cromwell’s yoke,”

In a survey of Ampthill Park, taken by order of Parliament, in the year 1653, two hundred and eighty-seven oaks are described as

hollow, and unfit for the use of the Navy. This report “incertam excussit *radice* securim,” and the trees remain, as useless as they were above a century and a half ago, but perhaps more beautiful than ever.

NOTE c. Page 15, line 9.

“*Since old Albini*” &c.

The Manor of Ampthill belonged, at the time of the Norman Survey, to the Baronial family of Albini, from whom it passed, by female heirs, to the St. Amands and the Beauchamps.

LYSONS’S *Magna Britannia*, vol. i. page 37.

NOTE d. Page 17, line 2.

“*Fanhope, whose grace and gallant bearing went
Deep to a royal heart*”—

In the year 1441, Ampthill, with the adjoining estates, was conveyed by one of the Beauchamps to Sir John Cornwall, who was afterwards created Lord Fanhope, a distinguished military character in the reigns of Henry IV. and V. At a tournament, at York, in 1401, he gained the heart of Elizabeth of Lancaster, the sister of

Henry IV. and widow of John Holland, Duke of Exeter, and on his marriage with this Princess, received the Order of the Garter. He died at Ampthill in the year 1443. Ibid. page 38.

NOTE e. Page 17, line 5.

“Cornwall, The Green,—Such was the name he bore,”

He was born at Sea, in the bay of St. Michael's Mount, and therefore called The Green Cornwall. (Sandford's Genealogical History, Book 4. Chap. i. page 258.) No circumstance or quality seems to have originated more names, or nick-names, than that of Colour.

NOTE f. Page 17, lines 9, 10.

Here, at his bidding, towered above the plain

Thy stately Castle, Ampthill;—

He was the founder of Ampthill Castle. Leland says it was built “of such spoils as he won in France,” and describes it as “standing,” in his time, “stately on a hill, with a foure or five toures of stone in the inner ward, besides the basse courte.” He

adds, "it may chauce that the marriage of the King's Sister was a great cause of the sumptuous building there." LELAND's Itin. vol. i. page 115.

NOTE g. Page 18, lines 1, 2.

*"Hither, in triumph, from the laureate field
Of Agincourt, he heaped the spoils of France"*

In the battle of Agincourt, he was one of the chosen Officers who had post in the Van, with the Duke of York.

NOTE h. Page 19, lines 1, 2.

*—"Many a heedless foot has pressed the spot
Where once it stood,—till yon fair Cross arose."*

On, or near the site of the Castle, a Gothic Stone Cross was erected in the year 1770 by the late Lord Ossory. Engraved on its base is a poetical inscription from the pen of an author better known by his name than his title, Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford. A public foot-path passes, close to this Cross, along the brow of the hill, commanding an extensive and beautiful prospect.

NOTE i. Page 19, line 8.

“The noblest guest they sheltered was the last.”

Soon after the year 1527, the estate of Amptill became vested in the Crown, probably by an exchange with Reginald Grey, Earl of Kent, whose family acquired it, either by purchase or descent, after the death of Henry Duke of Exeter. Upon this exchange, it was made an Honour by Act of Parliament. Catherine of Arragon resided here while her divorce was pending, and was cited from hence to attend the Commissioners at Dunstable, but refused to appear. There is no account of the Castle, or of its inhabitants, during the subsequent reigns. Probably it was suffered to go to decay, as the survey made by order of Parliament, under the Protectorate, speaks of it as having been, long ago, totally demolished. LYSONS. Ibid.

NOTE k. Page 20, line 1.

“Thy hand-maid rival is his destined bride”

Shakspear does not fail to touch on this circumstance of bitter aggravation. Cardinal Wolsey, when musing on Henry's intended marriage, exclaims—

The late queen's gentlewoman, a knight's daughter
To be her mistress' mistress! the queen's queen!—

HEN. VIII. Act 3, Scene 2.

NOTE 1. Page 21, lines 3, 4.

*“Faith held her stedfast empire o’er thy breast,
And whispering angels calmed thee from above.”*

Catherine's dream in her last illness is imagined with striking conformity to her situation and character.

Cath. Saw ye none enter while I slept?—

Griff. None, Madam.

Cath. No?—Saw you not, even now, a blessed troop

Invite me to a banquet, whose bright faces

Cast thousand beams upon me like the sun?

They promised me eternal happiness,

And brought me garlands, Griffith, which I feel

I am not worthy yet to wear—I shall

Assuredly.

HEN. VIII. Act 4, Scene 2.

NOTE m. Page 22, lines 3, 4.

——— “*not differing, nor the same*
Such should the kindred forms of Sisters be.”

——— *Facies non omnibus una,*
Nec diversa tamen, qualem decet esse sororum. OVID. *Metam.*

Amphill and Houghton may, poetically, be considered as sisters. Both, in early times, belonged to the same family, from which they both were conveyed to Lord Fanhope. Fuller, in his “*Worthies*,” when he speaks of Amphill (where no building then existed) as boasting “one of the three houses of the best credit in Bedfordshire,” confounds it with Houghton, which is situated partly in Amphill parish. The two enclosures are divided only by the road, and, together, occupy the hilly and wooded ground so remarkable in a generally level county. The surface of both is beautifully varied, and clothed with abundance of fine trees.

NOTE n. Page 22, line 10.

"braves the West."

Makes it fine, splendid.

The sun disdains to shine, for, by the book,

He should have *braved the East* an hour ago.

RICH. III. Act 5, Scene 3.

NOTE o. Page 23, line 1.

"It clothes this woodland promontory now"

From this spot there is a very striking view of both the Parks, of the tower of Milbrook Church, the ruins of Houghton, and the Vale of Bedford.

NOTE p. Page 23, lines 5, 6.

—— *"How quick the sunny breaks*

O'er thy grey tower, romantic Milbrook, pass!"

The picturesque village of Milbrook is rather less than a mile from Ampthill. As part of that property, it belonged to Sir John

Cornwall, who, the year after he was created Lord Fanhope, received the additional title of Baron of Milbrook.

NOTE q. Page 24, line 4.

"The Mansion of the 'fair, and wise, and good'"

Houghton Park was purchased, in the beginning of the reign of James I. by Mary, Countess of Pembroke, the sister of Sir Philip Sydney, whose fame still survives in the epitaph ascribed to Ben Jonson, part of which has been moulded into the text. By her the building now in ruins was erected. Its architecture was of the mixed kind so prevalent at that period.

LYSONS, Ibid. page 96, 97.

NOTE r. Page 24, line 9.

"And fame has told (why is the tale disproved?)"

In Houghton Park a tree is shewn under which Sir Philip Sydney is said to have written some of his works. But this tradition, Mr. Lysons observes, must be without foundation, as he died

many years before his sister, Lady Pembroke, had acquired any interest or property in the place.

— Sic extorta voluptas,

Et demptus, per vim, mentis gratissimus error!—

NOTE s. Page 26, line 4.

“The crests, and scutcheons of quaint heraldry”

On the south front of these ruins there still remain entire, on the frieze, various monograms, and devices of the families of Sydney and Dudley.

LYSONS. Ibid.

NOTE t. Page 26, line 9.

“But long may yonder ancient bower be seen”

Near the walls, there is a fragment of an old fashioned garden, which, if not so ancient as they are, “merite bien de l’être,” and the author has ventured to insinuate, rather than assert the fact. The garden, or bower in question is, at least, an accompaniment quite in harmony with the ruined building.

NOTE u. Page 27, lines 11, 12.

*“ But see, Soracte crowns the Latian plain,
As when the snow first veiled its glittering sides ”*

Vides? ut altâ stet nive candidum

Soracte.—

Whether such was, in Horace's time, the usual winter-dress of the mountain, or worn in seasons of extraordinary rigour only, does not appear. But it may be questioned if, since its ancient appellation has been so strangely travestied, the snow has ever “lain deep” on the sides, or on the summit of *St. Oreste*.

NOTE x. Page 28, line 8.

“ On to the Mansion leads the avenue ”

The present Mansion was built, in the year 1694, by the first Lord Ashburnham. It was purchased, with the estate of Ampthill, in the year 1720, by Viscount Fitz-William, who sold it, in the year

1736, to Lady Gowran, the grandmother of the late Earl of Upper Ossory. He died in the month of February, 1818, having devised the estates of Ampthill and Houghton to his nephew, Lord Holland, their present proprietor.

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